

## PRACTICES OF PUBLIC PROTESTS IN MODERN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The right to protest and express yourself freely is an important element of a Democratic Government, which every Indian has enjoyed since 1947. Really, this right enshrined in the constitution of India. But it comes with the responsibility that the protest action must be conducted in an orderly and peaceful manner and within the confines of the law. More importantly, those who protest must ensure that they do not infringe on other people's rights when they embark on protest action. Violence, destruction of private and public properties and looting have no place in this concerned. Overall, Gandhian tradition should be adopted for securing all demands in India. So, all aspects shall be explained in this regard.*

**KEYWORD:** Constitution, Demand, Government, Political, Protest, Public, Socialist & Society

**Received:** Sep 07, 2019; **Accepted:** Sep 28, 2019; **Published:** Nov 30, 2019; **Paper Id.:** IJPSLIRDEC20196

### INTRODUCTION

Practically the entire first half of the nineteenth century saw a wide variety of public movements directed towards either political and social reform, or towards a radical transformation of polity or social structure of the country. While at one extreme was the courteous application to the authorities to redress some wrong or to ask for better representation in services etc., at the other were attempts at either violent insurrection or at non-violent overthrow of the foreign regime. But in between there were a very large number and variety of forms of movements such as fasting picketing breaking of specific laws either individually or in groups, burning of foreign cloth or their boycott, refusal to vote or capturing assemblies in order to wreck the Constitution throwing bombs in legislative assemblies or raiding armouries or killing police officials. Mention may also be made of the communal riots or even mass killing of members of one community by the other or of the liberal tradition of quiet parliamentarism practiced by some (Sinha, K. K.. 1957)

The post-Independence phase in India has in many ways been a continuation of the same types of public conduct. Although the political framework in the pre-Independence days was quite distinct and different from the post-Independence one, this hardly seems to have made any material difference.

### DETAILS DESCRIPTION

It will try to consider here some aspect of the various methods of public protests or attempts to influence policy of the government of the day in the post-Independence period and discuss how far they are conducive to the generally accepted norms and objectives of the Indian polity.

In the period after 1947 some of the methods of political conduct may be listed more or less as follows:

- Small public meeting.

- Postering.
- Leafleteering.
- Submitting a Memorandum to the authority concerned.
- Press Conference.
- Issuing of statements to the Press.
- Making announcements or short speeches through a mobile loudspeaker.
- Street corner meetings.
- Long marches on foot, holding meetings whenever there is a group of audience.
- Mass meeting or rallies.
- Processions.
- Celebrating a Day- asking the people of a locality or of a state to hold protest meeting on a particular day, preceded by prabhat pheris
- Political Drama performed before a mass audience.
- Mass deputation.
- Torch-light processions.
- Demonstration en masse before legislature or minister, etc.
- Hartal for either a day or even 48 hours complete stoppage of public activities like transport, shopping office etc in protest.
- Strike.
- Stay in strike.
- Picketing.
- Satyagraha or breaking of specific laws – courting arrests in batches .
- Swuattin in a group in front of minister or office or across a road.
- Fasting either by one or more persons at a time-either for a limited period or till death. Sympathetic fasting by others.
- Burning oneself to death.
- Destruction of public property like trams buses railway bogies.
- Holding up of transport – buses trams, trains private cars .
- Uprooting of railway track.

- Damaging control boxes and fittings of railway communication.
- Dislocating and tampering with telephone and telegraphs lines.
- Burning of police stations government offices, municipal offices cooperatives. BDO's offices records ambulance vans fire-fighting trucks. Etc.
- Disturbance of public meeting of political opponents.
- Gherao – surrounding an officer or group of officers for several hours or days and sometimes not allowing them to communicate with others.
- Go slow or work to rule.
- Mass casual leave taking in offices either in a city or a whole state.
- Riot or assaults – mostly of a communal character – on the basis of religion, language or caste. It includes threatening to assault actual beatings or stabbing or throwing bombs on their houses or even assaulting in order to kill or burning houses or shops etc. belonging to such groups.
- Looting of property in godowns or railway wagons or trucks or markets.
- Localised attempts to throw off the state authority and to run an alternative administration (Telengana etc.).
- Declared or undeclared warfare against the Government in a region on the demand of either autonomy or complete independence (Nagaland).
- Bhoodan – Long marches on foot seeking land gifts etc. by batches of workers. This last in a category apart.

These, however, are not exhaustive in any sense while new techniques may still be evolved in the future in different areas faced with new situations.

Evidently there is hardly anything new as an element in this long list of activities compared to the experience of the past: only the context has changed. There is the tradition of Gandhism, there is also the Marxist influence. Then there is the old familiar lineage of communal conflict, now further extended beyond religious grouping to linguistic and regional chauvinism. Of course the background of the trade union agitational movement is also there. But it is noteworthy that in very few cases the authoritative tradition of one single inspiration is maintained. Gandhian and Marxan traditions are mixed up and they are further inspired by communal or caste considerations or linguistic factors and all these operate on the canvas of a parliamentary framework of politics. Thus a very peculiar and unique mosaic of conduct is emerging in this country that makes for a fascinating study (Morris-Jones, 1964).

If the restriction of the consideration to only the political movements as against those which are mainly directed towards meeting of the isolated or small group-grievances or purely of trade union interest or of social reform movements, it may probably be able to size up the issues arising out of the discussion. The overall pattern of Indian political framework is parliamentary democracy – in a federal structure of States each having a legislative assembly elected on adult franchise and a Federal Centre having a bicameral parliament the lower house being based on adult franchise. The government is of the Cabinet type and the President and the State governors have limited powers except in emergency. With a total population of over 133 Crores of which more than two-thirds i.e., about 287 Lacs are illiterate if literacy is defined as the

mere ability to sign one's name. Most States are now based on linguistic lines, although linguistic minorities abound in each State. Religious and caste groupings are today increasingly sharp and there is quite a good deal of elbowing between them for apportionment of quotas in services and trade and educational facilities and even in reservations in assemblies, committees, or representation in ministries. The question of the demand of autonomy by the tribals particularly on the borders and their prolonged struggle for it is a further example. It is also necessary to keep in mind that elections to the Parliament take place simultaneously with the Assembly elections so that national issues are hardly focused or debated, (Hindustan Times) and the main attention of electors is revetted to State politics and this trend has aggravated since the formation of linguistic States.

There are quite a number of political parties in addition to the Congress. The latter practically dominated the political and the administrative scene for over 20 years without any interruption since Independence (except in Kerala in 1956). The other parties appeared pygmies before it, merely as pressure groups instead of challengers to power. This makes for a certain psychological reaction (Dutta, Amlan, 1967) in them that needs to be considered. But after 1967 elections the situation has dramatically changed. Most of the erstwhile Opposition parties, either singly or in combination have had to take up positions of responsibility in the States though the Centre is still controlled by the Congress party, albeit with very much reduced margin. The parties themselves hold extreme views ideologically the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jan Sangh, the two Communist parties, the DMK and the Muslim League and the Akalis, the Socialist parties with varying degrees of radicalism, the small parties in the State built as a sort of personal followings of their leaders.

Then there are the 'objective conditions' as it were that pervade and dominate the total political scene- the population explosion (some 10 million mouths are added each year), with hardly any serious chance of reduction in numbers in the immediate future, the stark poverty and unemployment and underemployment (Segal, 1965), the deep-rooted and pervasive caste mindedness that divides this vast humanity into bits and promotes a kind of competition for safety and security in terms of barest existence, thus further galvanising the group mentality instead of releasing the individual from its clutches the rapid urban explosion leading to slums, mass culture and the rest, the all-pervading corruption, both political administrative and educational, the vast ocean of illiteracy making communication of modern complex ideas of government to the masses extremely difficult, the emerging half-educated elite of 25-40 age group in the different States striving for status and prestige, the tremendous prestige of those who are in power and vice versa the overwhelming importance attached to politics as against other spheres of life.

It is in this realistic Indian background that its Parliamentary democracy functions and political behaviour expresses itself in the manifold ways it does. Now, when use of the term Parliamentary democracy as a system of polity for this vast continental size of the country what exactly people (meaning those who feel convinced that this is the system which in spite of its inadequacies should be seriously worked) understand by it? The emphasis given on two major ideas : one that as the vast millions can not themselves run a modern government, it has to be done by delegated authority through the system of periodic elections and by establishing some institutions like the Bureaucracy and the Judiciary. Secondly, the decisions to be arrived at on questions of policy must be on the basis of exchange of ideas, debate, discussion in the background of a wide range of reliable information freely available. This debate may take place among the entire people and the delegates may participate in the same and this may be followed up in the legislatures at higher level of complexity and competency as a result of which decisions are to be made by majority voting and passed into law.

But, it is quite possible that even then good laws may not be made, or even if they are, they may not be properly

administered thus giving rise to all kinds of individual or group grievances or that new problems may arise and they are not taken cognizance of in good time. Or even it is possible that there is over-administration or distortion of the spirit of the law resulting in too much dependence of the individual on the State apparatus or on the very persons who begin to feel that they are 'rulers' instead of merely 'delegates' elected by the citizens as a matter of convenient social mechanism.

Some of these above causes may give rise to situations when the citizen or a section of them may feel that it is not possible to wait till the end of five year term and vote out those whom they had elected. They may further feel that it is not a question of throwing out the MLA but to impress upon them a particular need here and now, lest it is forgotten or it gets mixed up with other matters.

It is a process of thinking on these lines that gives rise to the need for what are called 'agitations', 'movements', 'direct action', 'satyagraha' etc.

It is obvious that operating on the canvas of 133 Crores people, divided a federal structure, the political structure of the Indian parliamentary democracy is bound to function in a manner that would leave much to be desired. Firstly, the quality of the average (which covers the largest slice) legislator is already low not only in terms of parliamentary ability even in terms of educational standards. Secondly, there is hardly any tendency to specialize and to go down to the details and complexities or the particular subject on which a bill is under the anvil. Thirdly, the motivations of ministers and the political parties in law-making are primarily political rather than social justice, so that on crucial aspects of the bill the opinion of the specialist in the bureaucracy is given scant respect (Sarkar, 1967) and the political considerations override the considerations of merit. Thus a sort of built in set up has emerged wherein germination and fertilization of popular grievances take place. This further nurtured by the fact that today there is hardly any degree of autonomy of the Bureaucracy (Mullik, 1967) which it had enjoyed in the past. In fact such an autonomy is desired publicly as a heritage of British imperialism. The bureaucracy in India has been completely demoralized as the several books by retired members of the Indian Civil Service have amply indicated. They are under the beckon and call of the ministers and even of the party bosses, and their discretionary powers, if at all they exist are nominal. Under these actual circumstances it is only natural that we have had in our country a growing volume of protests of all kinds from almost all quarters expressed in myriad forms. One major issue that arises here is: whether in this given pattern of parliamentary democracy, public protests are justifiable? From what is has discussed already, it is evident that the answer to this question is that public protests in this given situation ought only to be expected. But there may be a variety of forms that protests might take and one could argue that only certain types of protests are justifiable and the others are not. Another approach to the same problems could be that if the given pattern of Indian democracy is not satisfactory, the pattern itself needs to be looked into and adjusted so that protests became less likely.

Now taking the last aspect, first for a brief consideration. It can be said that "Public protests are inevitable and will grow more and more under parliamentary governments because they have become fetters on the concrete democratic rights of the vast majority of the population" (Aiyar and Srinivasan, 1965). A complete change of the social order, particularly the capitalist ownership of property (to be substituted by "social ownership"), and till such a stage of social order is achieved the people will not only carry on public protests but will also slowly prepare (and justifiably) for the revolutionary overthrow of all forces which obstruct the realization of the goal."

But, the monstrous Stalinist totalitarian political structure" is not fit for a democratic Government, because it has emerged after the destruction of the reign of capital in certain countries. So, a systematic protest movement will have to be

launched against Bureaucratic totalitarian government organizations. How is this at all possible when even ordinary expression of unorthodox opinion even in the fields of art or literature has become impossible in such countries. To say that parliamentary forms of government has proved inadequate and to declare that it has not merely outlived its utility but have become obstacles are two different things. Is it suggested thereby that even this inadequate partially defective structure should be demolished? This exclusivist, wholehogging, utopian and idealist approach seems to be the bane of some modern thinking that has given rise to passionate ideologies, and when these are made the base of powerful revolutionary movements and are not followed into practice after the revolution or the capture of power by the ideological revolutionaries, frustration takes hold of these idealists (Bell, 1960).

It is true that parliamentary democracy in India is not completely satisfactory. The correct approach, therefore, should be not to scrap it but to supplement it with other devices and mechanism and to improve the social, cultural and politico-economic background of the society in which this structure functions. So, it will come to this aspect of the matter at the end of this paper and try to indicate some concrete approaches to this fact of the problem. Meanwhile, let it be said that the method of democracy particularly in its Indian setting is inevitably a slow evolutionary process a process, of trial and error, one which gets acceptance as a tradition and as a pattern of habitual behaviour only after a long time. The revolutionary tries to have a short cut and to jump over the necessary period of educative social experience by the community and in so doing he snaps the life veins of democracy itself. Bonapartism and Stalinism are two obvious historical instances in this context.

Another aspect of discussion about the Direct Action. In this Context, by and large Parliamentary government has failed to embody the idea of democracy and this failure principally stems from the fact that under it there is little scope for popular participation in the political process. The institution of elections is inadequate as a basis of democratic government and the theory of representation is misleading and fails to base government on the will of the people. The individual as such has no role to play. The normal channels provided for removing the accumulated grievances prove to be important when serious disagreement is the issue. That is why that Direct Action is inevitable under parliamentary democracy (Kothari, 1960).

- Having justified direct action in parliamentary democracy, it is classified them in two types : those that enable to give to the parliamentary form a greater democratic content and those that lead to the deterioration towards authoritarianism. After that it defines certain criteria to judge whether a direct action has taken a desirable form. The chief criterion is that the means used must be intended to further the principal aim of strengthening freedom and democracy. But it is very difficult to analyse this particular case. Because, if the direct actionists act under the impulse of unconscious urges or under the direction of a wrong type of leadership and do not give due consideration to the ultimate outcome of their acts, it is quite probable that they will pull the parliamentary form of government to piece and push the country into the hands of a dictatorship or a military junta (Ibid). Thus, direct action is necessary under parliamentary democracy, but not all varieties of such action : only those that strengthen democracy and freedom. With this general formulation of criteria, David Bayley, another scholar who has given much thought to the subject, provides a fresh angle of view to the whole problem. He coins the phrase 'coercive public protests' and characterizes them with the following "they are aggregative, they are public as opposed to conspiratorial or clandestine, they impose a constraint upon government by their very presence and action and he includes in this category such actions as processions and public meetings, hartals, boycotts and strikes, fasts,

obstruction, courting of arrest, riots etc. He subdivides them into legal and illegal protests and further subdivides them into violent and non-violent categories. In his opinion it is disadvantageous to try to limit the policy of coercive protests for the following consideration :

- The stoppering of a socially useful or functional response.
- The weakening of the consensus between rulers and ruled.
- Intensification of the Gandhian martyrdom syndrome.
- Creation of a situation tactically advantageous for the non democratic political opposition.
- The alienation of the people from the police and court system.
- The danger of suppression of all unwanted opinion by the government.
- Danger of the task of regulating coercive public protest degenerating into authoritarian suppression of all protest.

These are indeed significant considerations to be carefully weighed before coercive protests are condemned. Bayley is convinced that coercive public protests (as defined by him) have a certain functional utility even in a parliamentary form of government, more so in countries like India where the elite who are policy makers are 'separated from the masses by a chasm of education, training and experience'.

It should be noted that Bayley considers only very mild forms of protests and does not consider the more violent ones such as burning of public property, uprooting of rails, attacking the police stations etc. One would have tended to agree with Bayley but the recent tendency of coercive protests merging into violent struggle trying to establish a parallel authority, makes one cautious.

Y. B. Chavan, the then Home Minister delivered a lecture on Direct Action and Parliamentary Democracy. He condemned organized defiance of law but permitted direct action in three exceptional circumstances : (1) organized defiance of law, by individuals who like Mahatma Gandhi though having fundamental respect for law, by reason of conscience, are faced with situations where satyagraha is necessary and are fit to undertake such individual action (p.9) (2). Any government that is itself out to destroy the values of parliamentary democracy needs to be replaced by direct action even under parliamentary democracy.... If the people have got the feeling that the power of government is being utilized and manipulated, that the basic values of democracy are being destroyed, then I think people have a right to resort to direct action (p. 11). Chavan accepts peaceful demonstrations or any peaceful movement for ventilating certain grievances but opposes direct action which he defines as 'organized defiance of law on a mass scale' (p.6), except under above exceptional cases. So, having noted the above viewpoints (Aiyar, 1967) of scholars both foreign and Indian and of one who is a leading politician with responsibility it may now be possible for us to sift the issue with greater clarity.

If the acceptance of the premise that democracy is based on delegation and discussion that there is bound to be a degree of trust on the representatives by the people they are representing and that policy making and decisions are to be arrived at by a wide spectrum of discussion based on reliable information made available by the government to the public-if we accept these two major premises, then all forms and methods of political action that help the process of discussion, of exchange of ideas, of creating an intelligent impact on the public mind, of debate and intercourse and the consequent interaction of a variety of differing ideas should be welcome. Public meetings, representations, press campaigns, occasional

disciplined, non-obstructive demonstrations or processions, petitions to the Parliament or to Ministers, arguing with legislators, leaflecting, etc., should be most welcome. Welcome because these indicate both to the public in general as well as to the authorities concerned, the particular point of view that is being pressed forward, together with the arguments or the facts behind it. The whole idea is that the ruling elite as well as the public is to be educated to a point of view, to be persuaded to it, not coerced into it.

Then there is another aspect of the matter. The purpose of political activities outside the legislature should be to make the legislature as well as the legislator more alert, more informed, more in touch with the people who have sent them to these sovereign bodies. Thus the political activities outside the legislatures are supplementary and conducive to the strengthening of the activities (Menhennet and palmer, 1961). They are not to or should not aim at eliminating the legislatures.

So, it must, therefore, consider each situation from that angle and each method and form of 'protest' from that 'viewpoint'. As a matter of fact the terms 'protest' or 'direct action' or 'satyagraha' are most unsuitable in the context of democracy. The function of the political parties is to promote endless debate both inside and outside the legislature throughout the country so that an intelligent crystallization of opinions evolves on a given issue. This process is sadly neglected and in its place melodramatic stunts are put up by the parties to indicate how many people are behind a party or a slogan and to create coercive conditions around those who have the authority and responsibility to decide. It is not difficult to agree to a broad (only a broad) classification of activities that should be permissible in a parliamentary democracy. There may be some which may be treated as borderline cases. But those which are openly and crudely coercive and dislocatory and which seriously undermine the authority of the State should not be considered justifiable.

Even so there are some major pulls in the Indian political society which compel coercive mass response. First of all the illiteracy and the general backwardness and group mentality so that it is not possible to discuss and explain different points of view with slight variation of nuances in policy and execution because of the difficulty of intellectual communication and correspondence. Secondly, for centuries the Indian people have hardly experienced a regime where State appeared as belonging to the people as their self created social instrument of public authority. They have always lived under the experience of State being something foreign to them something distant (at Delhi under the Muslims or at London during the British) not of their own such as like the village panchayat. Thus the distrust is deep-rooted and as a consequence the antagonism to the State can easily be kindled. Thirdly, the symbol of power is prized very high in this country. As a consequence once one has become a minister or even an MLA or MP, not only does he think that he belongs to the New Class of Rulers but the people who have elected him by their own votes also treat him that way. So that, such a person attaches too high a value to this position and sticks to it at any cost, thus creating a chasm between the rulers and the ruled and behaving in an authoritarian manner. If he has to come down, he feels he is being dragged down to dust and enjoys no respect correspondingly the people who criticize him relish a peculiar pleasure in dragging him down in the public estimation. Thus, it is a case of a neurotic social situation operating in a formal democratic political scene, a situation that not very conducive to the normal working of the latter. An abnormal and unreal kind of tension and hysterical atmosphere is attempted to be perpetuated. Fourthly, the Indians as a rule are given to broad and universal speculation because of their philosophical past. To this has been added the twentieth century fashions (though now spent out in the West) of socialism and planning. This has led to visions of foolproof ideologies and ideal patterns of social transformation to be achieved by planning. Pragmatism based on a background of hard work scientific outlook and slow but steady step-



by-step advance is not regarded highly. Sweeping slogans are more impressive. And finally, the parties as well as the people have realized from experience that the more violent and extensive the coercive protests, the quicker the attainment of the results immediately sought for. In fact there have been cases of even State ministers and Chief Ministers instigating 'direct action' against either the Centre or a neighbouring State, of the more virulent kind of getting away with it. This indicates that public coercion can get the better of parliamentary democracy and can even gather more votes in an election than those who either condemn it or who prefer the more sober educative process.

The political situation that has emerged after the 1967 General Elections provides a still more interesting background. Attempt is being made to group non-Congress government in States as against Congress governments in States, as also against the Centre which is under a weakened Congress. Chances of conflict between the Centre and the State or States are therefore maturing. How this political conflict will exhibit itself in the extra-parliamentary field would be worth studying. But it goes without saying that the inevitable result would be to weaken the cohesive character of the country as a whole. The Hindu-Sikh friction over a gurdwara-temple controversy in Calcutta (Statesman) had its immediate repercussion in the State of Punjab, and such or other issues of conflict between States cannot be excluded either. But it is equally likely that party governments in States may themselves encourage public movements and agitations against the Centre, (or against other States) as was seen even when most States were under the Congress party on such issues as boundary, siting or allocation of projects etc.

Thus the future is rather ominous and it is therefore necessary to take a strong principled position on the question of satyagraha and the like on the one hand, and a constructive farsighted view of entire Indian polity on the other. The positive part of the discussion can be broadly divided under two head. What can be done to improve the structure of Indian Parliamentary democracy or to initiate other policies that would minimize causes and frequency of 'coercive protests' or satyagrahas etc. And after these steps are taken, or even, sometimes, before that, or simultaneously, how should the state or those who are committed to the values of freedom and democracy react to such 'coercive protests' if and when they take place in the future.

The period of General Elections, which is five years, appears to be too long in the public eye. Therefore, this might be supplemented by some forms of referendum on major issues in a given state or on a national scale depending upon the issue involved. The referendum on the question of the integration of Goa or otherwise was a healthy one and encourages us to adopt this method on a larger scale. Perhaps with the formation of Panchayats in most part of the country, these could be treated as colleges for seeking support or rejection of a given Proposal (Roy, 1946). So that a more broad based democratic device is made available to the public for giving vent to its feelings on some burning issue even before the General Elections are due.

The electronic media, radio can play an effective role in a community which is two thirds illiterate. The network of the has now expanded extensively and has established itself as a major means of mass communication. Cannot this be used to discuss the pros and cons of an issue that agitates public mind? So far it has refrained from too close an involvement and the caution is no doubt based on substantial considerations. But is it not necessary also to consider that perhaps by a cautions advance towards 'involvement' in terms of educating the public there are advantages far more numerous in terms of strengthening parliamentary democracy? The media can give the facts behind an issue and the spectrum of arguments on it, so that the individual hearer can be helped to form his private judgement in a context different from the one that he gets when he is a member of an audience before a demagogic orator giving only one side of the case in

a passionate melodramatic style. The execution of such a reorientation of policy by the media is indeed fraught with difficulty but the present posture appears to be one of escapism by a very powerful organ of mass education.

It is already referred to the tying up of the election to the parliament with that to the State legislature. Unless they are separated in time, the national image, the national issues do not create a deep impress and the tendency to be parochial is galvanized. A separate election to the parliament would involve the public in a nationwide debate on national issues and it would thus help crystallization of political forces on a national scale and not merely as a summation of provincial forces as at present. The participation in a national debate would have a great educative impact on the citizens.

The political parties today, especially the larger ones, have developed a pattern of 'High Command' i.e. overcentralised leadership outside the legislatures. All Parties have developed the attitude that the party machinery and authority is rigid and supreme and the value attached to party partakes something of a religious sanctity (Sinha, 1957). But party is really only a part of the whole i.e. the society. Politically the constituency and the legislature are a truer reflection of the society. As a matter of fact the Indian Constitution does not mention the political party even for once. But the legislator is more afraid of his own party than of anybody else. A party system is almost a necessity in parliamentary democracy. But legislator is more afraid of his own party than of anybody else. A party system is almost a necessity in Parliamentary democracy. But it has to be a loose and democratic party. The legislator's primary concern should be his constituency and its mood and thinking and its problems (Menhennet and Palmer, 1967). He should therefore be given more freedom and flexibility in this relationship than what the present rigidity with his party permits. If this is allowed, the elected legislator belonging to any party would be reflecting the mood of the constituency more truly than he does today and the dialogue between him and the constituency would be more meaningful. This will obviate much of the atrophied relationship between the MLA and his constituency in between the two elections. Moreover, the legislator will not then tend to divide his constituency between those who voted for him and those who did not. Much of the antagonism based on such partisan spirit today arises in fact due to this defect. Today, unfortunately the party spirit dominates over the representation spirit and it is not only harmful to parliamentary democracy but is one of the major causative factors of tension in the political life of the community. The representative once elected represents all and not only those who voted for him and he must behave like that. This is one of the cardinal principles of parliamentary democracy.

The role of the press is also significant in the conduct of agitations. One difficulty that has arisen is the fact that leading press editors or owners have thought it fit to take to politics. They control their papers (sometimes chains or groups of them) and they are sometimes prominent members of the ruling party, even ministers. The real function of the press is to educate the public and this cannot be done properly if one is linked up with the ruling party. Facts have to be dug up, however, uncomfortable they turn out to be, analysed honestly and published. But in the context mentioned above facts sometimes need to be suppressed and then the media becomes a sort of a camouflaged instrument of propaganda of a biased point of view. Although the press is not mentioned in the constitution, a free press is a sine-qua-non of any democracy. It gives the information in full and it promotes debate and discussion without political inhibition. But the present trend has given rise to a form of press that only invites the rise of partisan press and even the party press. If the major daily papers played their role well there will be hardly scope for sensational yellow press or papers that would be able to fan passion and hatred. There might be periodicals (views journal) with different points of view but the facts relating to an issue or events can then not be distorted.

Most cases of agitations arise due to the accumulation of individual grievances as a result of redtapism or as a

result of not giving attention to individual representations. This is either the function of the Ministers or of the Administrators. Taking the Minister's case first, there are two aspects. The ministers and the legislators succeed during elections mainly on the basis of mobilizing a large number of whole-time and part-time political (or semi-political) workers and by promising to satisfy many local community or group demands. But they are not able to satisfy these in most cases, although hopes are aroused and kept up on false pretences. Thus the MLA or the Minister becomes a factor in promoting a vicious circle of hope followed by bitterness, although he tries to satisfy at least some of them by methods and ways which are not straight and upright from the administrative point of view.

The ministers and the MLAs and the party leaders are in addition interminably engrossed in infighting and chess playing within the party, so that most of them really have hardly any time or aptitude to seriously look into the problems relating to their ministries.

The position of the Administrator, on the other hand, has also deteriorated considerably. The government seldom lays down straight and unambiguous policies – in most cases it lays down contradictory or conflicting policies. Even then the Administrator is not expected to administer these on the basis of his own discretion. He has to toe the line and follow the unwritten hints and suggestions of the Minister or his key supporters on pain of transfer or other forms of snubbing. Therefore, the administrator today cares little about efficient administration for which job he is really paid. He is busy playing the sycophant around the boss and doing as little decision-making as possible.

If the accumulation of grievances has to go, this whole degenerating mal-functioning of the bureaucracy and the secretariat must go. Now it is easily said than done. Unless the political elite comes to realize that stage has been reached when either people consciously drift towards a politics of coercive protests as the only way of getting anything done or they agree that the sound principles of administration, well-known and repeated ad nauseum be accepted for actual practice and no amount of interference will be tolerated there is no hope.

Then there is the impact of ideology and tradition. The Gandhian tradition has created a kind of moral sanction for satyagraha and direct action against abuses of power or for securing some demand. It is true that today satyagrahas and fasts etc. are not undertaken with that meticulous care as regards preparatory steps or method or volunteer recruitment as Gandhi used to apply (Aiyar, 1967). But that is in a way natural. Once the novelty wears out, degeneration is bound to follow. Similarly, the Marxists believe in class struggle and have enshrined partial struggles on a high pedestal of revolutionary strategy as educating the masses in the principles of revolution. Therefore, to them coercive protest movements are not only not bad in principle but necessary tools and schools for revolution. Then there is the tradition of revolutionary terrorizing of those in authority and of 'political dacoity' and terror. All these traditions are to be considered in the cumulative impact on the activist political youth not in isolation from each other. And nothing succeeds like success. With this heady cocktail of ideologies in operation, it is far from the boring argumentative constitutional democracy confined mainly to the legislatures.

Thus this whole complex of tradition needs to be revalued in the context of a free democratic society, first intellectually and then at the political levels of operation before the moral force of satyagraha or partial struggles can be diminished.

In facing these protest movements in the future there are again two aspects. One relating to the Government and the ruling party. They must take cognizance of the essential demands at an early stage and seriously take their position on

merit. In doing so they should not hesitate to meet those making the demands. Such of the demands that they can accept they should do so without avoidable delay. Such of those they cannot, they should argue against in a persuasive spirit and say clearly that these cannot be given. And then they must stand firm on this. Further they must explain as widely as possible to the public at large their stand as often as necessary. If representations are made by those pressing for demands they should be met. But under no circumstance should time be given to the delegation under sense of threat of satyagraha etc., for such a course only encourages such coercive methods. The whole emphasis is to be on the merit of a case and not the number of 'masses' behind it or any kind of threat from any quarter.

On the other side there is the responsibility of the Opposition parties. There is a whole range of activities that would help focusing demands or grievances in the eye of the powers-that-be and of the public at large. Then there is the legislator and the legislature to be influenced. There should be increasingly intense activity on them to help them see the point of view of those making the representation. If the case is just and reasonable it is bound to have some impact. But one should be prepared to accept the possibility that the entire point of view may not be acceptable or that the other interests affected may also press their points of view, and the result may be something less than the original demands. If the Opposition parties in their own hearts accept that the method of coercion would open the floodgates of anti-democracy and therefore should not be encouraged under most circumstances, and that methods of persuasion have to be deployed in every new styles and forms, then it would not be easy to launch coercive agitations as is the case today.

But the fact is that most political leaders of the opposition are imbued with the amalgam of Gandhian-cum-Marxan methods of agitation and being in opposition they tend to take that short-cut..

## CONCLUSIONS

To sum up such a vast and delicate subject, it might say that tradition dies hard, in fact it is providing a sort of moral sanction to coercive political methods, the social, economic and cultural situation in India is not yet conducive to the functioning of parliamentary democracy, and even the parliamentary structure as established here is inadequate. Coercive agitations should therefore be expected. But the situation can be substantially eased if some structural and methodological changes in the system are brought about and such agitations may be reduced in either intensity or number. But it is equally important to face squarely the issue that coercive protests (and not those which may not be coercive) are not at all conducive to parliamentary democracy and therefore should be strongly repudiated, despite the sacred traditions behind them.

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